

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

# Making It Work

Department of Education

## A Student's Story

# EXPLORATION

Exploration. Sometimes that's what it takes to find your way in life. Toby Arneson's story illustrates this well.

As a fifth grader, Toby started playing the baritone. When he went on to Lincoln Northeast High School, Bill and Linda Arneson felt that it was important for their son to be involved in an activity outside of the classroom. In fact, they felt so strongly about this that they required him to continue with the instrument and join the high school band. While this was not his passion, it was good for him to explore the experience of working as part of a group.

Exploration continued for Toby throughout high school. With the encouragement of his parents, he took a variety of classes that included computer drafting, machine tools, and welding. As a student with a learning disability in written expression and

a speech language impairment, Toby struggled with school, particularly when it came to time management and completing homework. Relationships with teachers were sometimes strained. The Arnesons attended his IEP meetings and worked with the teachers to keep him focused and headed in the right direction.

Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) entered the picture during Toby's last two years of high school and provided him with more opportunities for exploration.

(Continued page 3)



Toby Arneson

## Focus on Employment:

# Employers Speak

Who knows better than employers what it takes to be successful on the job? Representatives from Nebraska employers have shared their suggestions for success to be passed along to you. Check out the advice this employer has for students as they begin interviewing for jobs.

1. Dress appropriately for an interview and be alert and enthusiastic. Maintain good eye contact throughout the interview.
2. Bring a well-prepared resume if you have one. If not, take the time to prepare one. This distinguishes you from the pack.
3. Know your strengths and your skills. Be prepared to talk about your work history and work experiences, as well as your educational background in detail. Make sure the employer knows what you can do for them and how you can make a difference for them, if hired.

(Continued page 3)

### In This Issue:

A Student's Story: Exploration .....	1
Focus on Employment: Employers Speak .....	1
Partners in Planning: Learning on the Job .....	2
About This Publication .....	4
Additional Resources .....	4

# Learning On the Job

It is sometimes necessary to provide extra support for persons with disabilities when beginning a new job. There are many ways of doing this and a particularly effective method is by providing direct support in the workplace. Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) offers two services, On-the-Job Evaluation and On-the-Job Training, to provide this support.

## **On-the-Job Evaluation**

An On-the-Job Evaluation (OJE) may be used to evaluate a person to determine their ability to learn a specific job. It also may help the person determine if they have an interest in doing that kind of work. Voc Rehab makes the arrangements for this and pays the employer to cover the cost of having the individual work at their place of business. This includes paying a wage (not less than the federal minimum wage) to the person who is being evaluated.

An OJE may be completed over a period of time ranging from 1-90 hours, based upon the needs of the person and the requirements of the job. Depending upon the results of the evaluation, the individual may pursue a job in this type of position or move on to explore other employment interests and options.

## **On-the-Job Training**

On-the-Job Training (OJT) is a service that helps a person acquire or improve essential job related knowledge, skills, abilities, and/or behaviors in an actual job setting. The person (trainee) works in a real job in a business. The business provides instruction, training, supervision, and monitoring to assist the trainee in learning the job. Voc Rehab counselor support is available to the employer and trainee to facilitate successful training.

Voc Rehab pays a training fee to the business to cover their costs of providing instruction, training, supervision, and monitoring. Typically, this fee decreases over time as the costs to the business reduce after the person gains skills and increases productivity. The trainee is paid the same wage as any other person hired for the job (not less than the federal minimum wage). The length of training is dependent upon the needs of the individual and the complexity of skills required by the job.

On-the-Job Training can be terminated at any time if it is determined that the trainee is not progressing satisfactorily. The business is under no obligation to hire the person after the training has been completed. However, experience has shown that most businesses do hire a successful trainee.

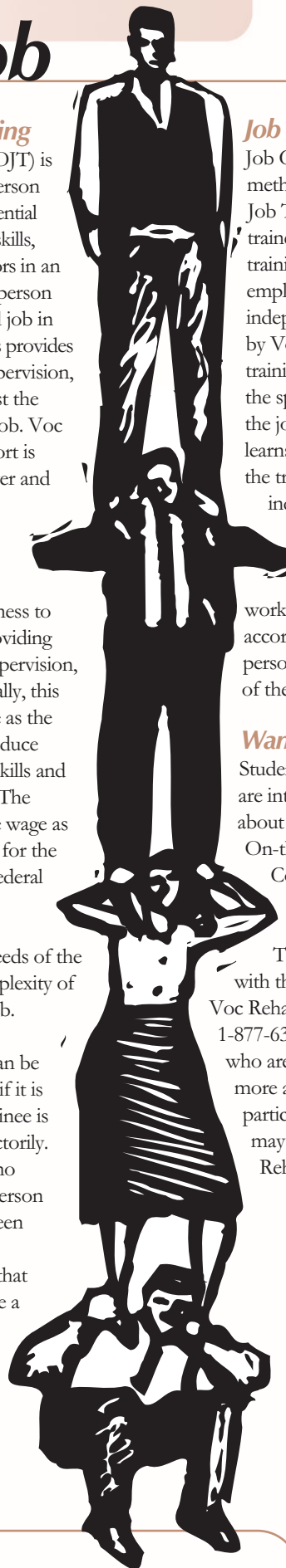
## **Job Coaching**

Job Coaching is another method of providing On-the-Job Training. A qualified job trainer (coach) provides the training, rather than the employer. The coach is an independent contractor, paid by Voc Rehab, to provide training to the individual on the specific requirements of the job. The coach initially learns the job right along with the trainee and then assists the individual in mastering the job. The amount of time needed for the person to be able to work independently varies according to the needs of the person and the complexity of the job.

## **Want to know more?**

Students or their families who are interested in learning more about On-the-Job Evaluation, On-the-Job Training, or Job Coaching may contact the Vocational Rehabilitation Transition staff working with their school or the Voc Rehab State Office at 1-877-637-3422. Employers who are interested in learning more about the opportunity to participate in these programs may also contact the Voc Rehab State Office.

**Voc Rehab  
pays a  
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and  
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# EXPLORATION . . . continued

(Continued from page 1)

Voc Rehab Employment Specialist Paige Rose provided career counseling, attended IEP meetings, and set up assessments for him. Interest testing was completed to assist him in identifying a future career path. As he neared the completion of high school, plans were made for him to attend Southeast Community College (SCC) at the Milford campus. In preparation for entrance exams, Toby took a composition class at night to help him meet the requirements.

Attending SCC allowed Toby to explore living an independent lifestyle. He lived in the dorm at Milford and was responsible for getting up, attending classes, and driving to and from school and home on the weekends. As it turned out, college was not the answer for Toby at that time of his life. Whether due to lack of interest, struggles with classes, or both, Toby determined that he prefers to get up, go to work, and have his evenings free instead of studying.

After leaving college, Voc Rehab once again entered the picture. Exploration continued for Toby as he participated in a Vocational Evaluation that included hands-on assessments and computerized interest activities.

He attended a Job Seeking Skills class, followed by job placement services. Working in food service seemed to be a direction that was of interest to Toby. His mother, Linda, notes that he likes food (something a mother would certainly know), had an interest in cooking, and was familiar with the hospital cafeteria environment. So, when Voc Rehab presented him with the opportunity for On-the-Job Evaluation and On-the-Job Training at Bryan LGH West Hospital, he was ready to give it a try.

Jackie Nisely, Manager of Nutrition & Dining Services at Bryan LGH West, provided the On-the-Job Training (OJT) for Toby. During this period, Jackie identified Toby's strengths, allowed him to do the tasks he performed well, and helped with accommodations to assist him on the job. Jackie noted that Toby was very reliable and put forth great effort on the job.

Upon completion of the OJT, Voc Rehab Placement Specialist Jean Bullen assisted Toby in developing his resume, preparing for interviews, completing applications, and exploring job leads (yes, more exploration). It all paid off when, in September of 2007, Toby was hired as a permanent, full time employee at Bryan LGH West as a Food Services worker. His responsibilities include delivering and retrieving food trays to the floors at meal time, taking out the trash, filling mop buckets, and checking dishwasher temperatures.

(Continued on page 4)

## Focus on Employment:

# Employers Speak

(Continued from page 1)

4. Complete the employment application correctly and completely. Answer all questions and be prepared to explain any issues from the past or gaps in employment. Let them know when you are available to start work. Tell them you will be a dependable employee and then, do it, if hired.
5. Smile, be friendly and shake the interviewer's hand when introduced. Thank the interviewer for the interview when it is over and understand before leaving what the next steps are. If possible, send the interviewer a thank you note or a thank you e-mail.

This excellent advice was provided by:  
Mike Starbuck,  
HR Director  
Reinke Manufacturing Company, Inc.



# EXPLORATION . . . continued

(Continued from page 3)

Toby says the best thing about his job is working with the people. He gets along well with everyone and they seem to like him. He says the worst thing about the job is that he has to be at work at 6:30 a.m., which means that he has to get up by 5 a.m. He plans to stay in this position for a while and eventually may try for advancement in the food service area.

Toby and his parents are quick to point out the benefits of working with Voc Rehab. Toby says that if he does decide to pursue other employment in the future, he will look to Voc Rehab for assistance. Linda Arneson says, "Our experience with Voc Rehab was a great one. I feel like the staff had our best interests at heart and they worked very hard to find a good fit for Toby." She goes on to say that she hopes other families might have the same positive results they had in working with the agency. She notes, "I was somewhat discouraged because I couldn't help Toby myself. I know my husband felt the same way. It was a wonderful thing to know that there was someone who could."

On the horizon for Toby is the opportunity for him to move from his parents' home. His mother says that, as he gains maturity, they would like to see

him live on his own. It looks like Toby will have yet another opportunity for exploration!

## For More Information:

Contact the State  
Vocational  
Rehabilitation Office  
in Lincoln at  
**1-402-471-3644**  
or toll free at  
**1-877-637-3422.**

You may obtain  
information on the  
Voc Rehab Service  
Office in your area by  
calling these numbers  
or accessing the  
Service Office listing  
on the web at:  
<http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us/vr/office.html>

## About this Publication

This publication, produced by Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation, is intended for students with disabilities and their families. The next issue, Volume #30, is scheduled for distribution in March 2009.

Please contact us if you:

- Would like additional copies of this publication.
- Have questions or would like more details about any of the information contained in this issue.
- Have a success story you'd like to share with us.
- Have suggestions for topics for future issues.
- Wish to be removed from the mailing list for this publication.

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## Additional Resources

If you have questions or concerns about services from Vocational Rehabilitation or are looking for additional disability resources, contact the Hotline for Disability Services/Client Assistance Program at 1-800-742-7594 or in Lincoln at 402-471-0801 or e-mail [victoria.rasmussen@cap.ne.gov](mailto:victoria.rasmussen@cap.ne.gov)

